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ABSTRACT

The report describes the development and effectiveness of a program designed to help handicapped students fomerly served within New York state operated or supported school settings make the transition into public (local) high schools. Teacher-trainers provided services through two program components: career-related program support, which emphasized career-related knowledge, skills, and vocational attitudes or behavior of students who regularly attend classes; and attendance improvement, which focused on students with histories of excessive absences. While the career-related knowledge and skills and the vocational attitude objectives were both met, the attendance improvement objective was not. Staff were generally positive about the program although they believed that notification of student eligibility and the amount of time spent trying to retrieve students with long term absences were major obstacles. (CL)

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P.L. 89-313
CAREER PREPARATION PROGRAM
1984-85
FINAL REPORT

OEA Evaluation Report

Office of Educational Assessment
New York City Public Schools
110 Livingston Street
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P.L. 89-313
CAREER PREPARATION PROGRAM
1984-1985
FINAL REPORT

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SUMMARY

The Career Preparation Program is a state-supported program offering services to handicapped students formerly served within state operated or supported school settings. The program was created to help these students make the transition into the public high school system.

Teacher-trainers provided services through two program components. The Career-Related Program Support Component focused on improving the career-related knowledge, skills, and vocational attitudes or behavior of students who regularly attend classes. The Attendance Improvement Component focused on improving the attendance of students with histories of excessive absences. While the career-related knowledge and skills and the vocational attitude objectives were both met, the attendance improvement objective was not.

Program strengths included the career-related knowledge and supportive approach of teacher-trainers and the individual attention given to participating students. Program weaknesses included inefficient procedures for identifying eligible students and an insufficient number and variety of vocational program and employment opportunities.

Among the recommendations included in the report are the following:

- Procedures for determining student eligibility should be modified. The State should be appraised of the need to decrease the time between the date students leave state-supported institutions and the time notification of eligibility is sent to the program office, and to improve the accuracy of information on eligible students.

- More accurate record-keeping procedures should be developed to facilitate the comprehensive assessment of program success.

- The program focus on improving attendance of Long Term Absentees (L.T.A.s) should be reconsidered. If teacher-trainers limited their involvement with L.T.A.s to providing referrals to existing attendance services, they would be able to focus more on participating students.

- A more accessible means of career and vocational assessment is needed to provide this service to a greater number of students.

- Program staff should develop additional employment opportunities, to provide a greater number of participating students with work experience.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Career Preparation Program (a Division of High Schools program) is a state-funded supplement to the regular services offered by the New York City Public Schools special education division. The purpose of the program is to integrate handicapped students formerly served within state operated/supported school settings into the public high school system. The primary emphasis of the program is on improving the career-related knowledge and skills of P.L. 89-313 eligible students (P.L. 89-313 is the designation of the Public Law which allocates funds for these students). The program offers services through two components: career-related program support and attendance improvement. Services are tailored to meet the specific needs of individual students. The primary goals of the program are to:

- Improve career-related knowledge and skills of P.L. 89-313 high school students.
- Improve the attendance of those P.L. 89-313 students demonstrating excessive absences or truancy,
- Assess vocational attitudes and behaviors of P.L. 89-313 students and identify problematic areas to be addressed in an effort to better prepare them for employment,

Services are provided by teacher-trainers who work directly with students, supportive services personnel, and teachers. The 1984-85 program was a continuation and refinement of the previous year's program. Its major modification was to expand career-related support services to a larger number of eligible students.

Program Objectives

The primary objectives of the Career Education Program, relate to career-related knowledge and skills, attendance, and vocational attitudes and behavior. Specific evaluation objectives state that:

- Eighty percent of the students enrolled in the career-related support component should attain a passing grade in the subject in which the teacher-trainer provided career education support,
- Students enrolled in the attendance component should demonstrate a statistically significant increase in attendance between the spring, 1984 term and the 1984-85 school year,
- Pre-Vocational Behavior Rating scales should be completed for all students participating in the career-related suport component of the program.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation design utilized several methodologies including observations, structured interviews, and document review to examine program objectives. An evaluator visited a representative sample of schools to observe program structure and implementation. During these visits, the evaluator interviewed career education teacher-trainers, special education assistant principals, and teachers. Sample sites were selected based on student enrollment and region. Teacher-trainer interviews focused on the number of students served, implementation procedures, parental involvement, procedures used to fit programs to individual educational programs (I.E.P.s), and recommendations for program modifications. Interviews with special education assistant principals focused on their level of involvement in the program, general school response to P.L. 89-313 students, perceived student changes, strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations related to the program. Teacher interviews focused on the assistance teachers and

students received from the teacher-trainers, perceived student changes, program strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations.

The evaluation team collected quantitative data from program records. These data included attendance during spring, 1984, and during both the fall and spring terms of the 1984-85 school year, students' grades in courses supported by teacher-trainers, vocational program and job referrals, vocational assessment referrals, contacts with school staff, and number and topics of parent workshops and staff training sessions. Teachers filled out a Pre-Vocational Behavioral Rating Scale for each student participating in the career-related support component. This scale consists of 14 questions addressing issues such as punctuality, grooming and dress, ability to follow directions, cooperativeness with peers, and appropriateness of social skills.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report is organized into four chapters. A brief introduction to the program is included in the first chapter. A description of program structure and implementation is presented in the second chapter. An analysis of outcome data appears as chapter three. The final chapter contains conclusions and recommendations for future program modifications.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

SITES

The Career Preparation Program operated in all schools containing one or more 89-313 students. Seventy-eight* high schools participated in the program, during the 1984-85 school year. Fourteen of these sites were vocational-technical schools, the remainder were academic-comprehensive. Sites were grouped by regions with one teacher-trainer assigned to each region. The number of schools and students, by region appears in Table 1.

STUDENT SELECTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

All handicapped high school students formerly served within state-operated or state-supported settings were eligible for program services. The Division of Special Education of the New York City Public Schools received a budget report from the State Education Department in October, 1984. This report included the names, New York City student identification numbers, addresses, and assigned schools of all students eligible for P.L. 89-313 funding during the 1984-85 school year. In addition, and in line with State Education Department policy, all new P.L. 89-313 students entering the system during the 1984-85 school year, as well as all students in the system who did not appear on the component/site list also received appropriate services. Teacher-trainers records indicated that a total of 237 students were enrolled in the program.**

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* This figure is based on student data provided by teacher-trainers. A memoranduam dated December 6, 1984 originating in the Office of High School Special Education Operations projected that 81 schools would participate in the program.

** The December 6, 1984 memorandum projected that 372 students would participate in the program.

Table 1

The Distribution of Schools and Students by Region and Teacher-Trainer

Regions[a]	Number of Schools	Number of Students[b]
Manhattan	17	36
Bronx	13	50
Brooklyn West	14	45
Brooklyn East and Staten Island	16	37
Queens (A)	9	40
Queens (B)	9	29
	78	237

[a] Schools in Queens were divided between two teacher-trainers because of the larger number of 89-313 students expected in that region.

[b] Because of staffing changes and inaccurate record-keeping, data for many participants were incomplete.

- Students were divided fairly evenly among teacher-trainers.

STAFF

The positions of six teacher-trainers were funded through reimbursable allocations to the Career Preparation Program, although a variety of school personnel participated in the program. The Division of High Schools' Office of Special Education Operations was responsible for the operation of the program, including recruiting and selecting teacher-trainers. The Career Education Coordinator for High School Special Education acted as the direct overseer and coordinator of teacher-trainer activities. Each of the teacher-trainers was assigned to one of the six borough assistant superintendents' offices and worked under his or her supervision. Three of the six teacher-trainers participated in the program during the previous year. The remaining three were hired during the 1984-85 school year; one in September, and two in February to replace teacher-trainers who began the program in September and subsequently left to accept promotions. The three new teacher-trainers were trained by the coordinator and received guidance from both the previous teacher-trainer in their region and the current teacher-trainers from the other regions. The assistant principal of special education and several teachers (usually special education teachers) at each school were involved in the program though funded by other sources. Assistant principals' duties included assisting in the identification of eligible students, discussing individual student needs with teacher-trainers, and acting as liaisons between teacher-trainers and school personnel. The general duties of teacher-trainers were to improve student attendance and provide support in career-related high school programs.

COMPONENT ACTIVITIES

The Career Preparation Program consisted of two components, each providing services to students based on their Individualized Educational Programs (I.E.P.s). Students were placed into one of the two program components based on their attendance during the spring, 1984 term. The Career-Related Program Support component provided career-related support to students attending school on a regular basis. The Attendance Improvement component provided attendance support to students with poor attendance records. Career education teacher-trainers performed a variety of direct and indirect services through each of the program components. The following description of component activities is based on teacher-trainer logs, student data, and interviews with teacher-trainers and a sample of special education assistant principals and teachers from individual sites.

Career-Related Program Support

Teacher-trainers provided course support in career education to eligible students with satisfactory attendance records (i.e., percentage attendance at or above 75 percent during the spring, 1984 term). Teacher-trainers visited their sites from several times a week to one visit every two or three weeks depending on the number of students enrolled at a given site as well as the amount of teacher support and follow-up deemed necessary.

One feature of this component was to integrate students into general high school activities, particularly career-vocational programs. Teacher-trainers indicated that they referred approximately 107 of the 164 students who participated in this component to some type of career/vocational program. These programs included the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation,

Placement and Referral Services, Executive Internships, Work-Study programs, and a variety of vocational education shops.

Several teacher-trainers engaged students in planning career-related activities such as job fairs in their schools. These activities increased student awareness of careers and facilitated their contact with students and teachers involved in vocational programs within their schools.

Teacher-trainers provided staff development support to at least one teacher of each student. The type of assistance varied depending on the teacher-trainer and the needs of the specific teacher. Generally, experienced teachers were informed of new techniques and provided with books and other materials. In addition to these services, beginning teachers were also provided with more directive, supportive assistance. Teacher-trainers emphasized their role as supportive rather than as supervisory. Most teachers receiving support were special education or career-vocational teachers. However, a few teachers taught mainstream classes. Although teacher-trainers tried to deal with teachers of career-related courses this was not always possible. Fifty percent of the supported students were supported in non-vocational classes. In some cases, this occurred because students had already completed the vocational sequence in their program. In other cases students may not have been interested in any of the vocational courses offered in their schools.

Staff response to support activities provided by teacher-trainers was positive. All of the special education assistant principals interviewed indicated that teacher-trainers provided services which were beneficial to their staff. All of the teachers indicated that both teachers and students

profited from the efforts of teacher-trainers. Teachers considered the teacher-trainers' curriculum suggestions, notification of new materials (particularly career-related), non-judgmental approach, and general professional and emotional support as particulary useful. Activities considered particularly helpful to students included job and program referrals, assistance in identifying interests, additional counseling and understanding support.

Teacher-trainers provided services to parents of participating students as well. Each teacher-trainer organized two parent meetings. The structure and content of these meetings varied, but usually included information on general high school programs or programs specifically designed for potential dropouts, information on community and school-based vocational training and career education programs. Several teacher-trainers arranged for outside agencies such as hospitals or corporations to make presentations. Unfortunately, parental response was minimal, with only five to ten parents attending sessions with each teacher-trainer.

Teacher-trainers arranged for some students to take part in career/vocational assessments. These assessments were used to help students identify their interests and to assist teacher-trainers in referring them to appropriate career-related high school programs. Because teacher-trainers were not themselves trained to perform these assessments and because of the logistical difficulties of arranging services with outside agencies (i.e. one outside agency required that students be transported to a central location on five consecutive afternoons), only a small number of students received assessments.

Teacher-trainers arranged to have a teacher fill out a Pre-Vocational Behavioral Rating Scale for each 89-313 student. These forms were used to generate concrete goals for each student to be addressed during the remainder of the 1984-85 and the full 1985-86 school years. Specific findings of the scales will be discussed in the chapter reporting student outcomes.

Attendance Improvement

The purpose of the attendance component was to improve attendance of students with a history of excessive absences (i.e. students with spring, 1984 attendance records of less than 75 percent, or students developing attendance problems during the 1984-85 school year).

A variety of outreach and retrieval efforts were used to encourage students to attend school. Teacher-trainers referred students to existing support personnel services such as attendance teachers, SPARK counselors, school based support teams, and guidance counselors.

Students whose attendance improved during the year were referred to alternative programs such as shared instruction, internship programs, or after-school career programs. If it was clear a student was unable to stay in school long enough to graduate, they where encouraged to take the General Equivalency Diploma Examination.

Teacher-trainers provided interest and support by following up on each student's progress with an average of 8.3 contacts with attendance staff per student. Additional efforts were made to contact parents by mail or telephone and, when feasible, through home visits.

III. OUTCOME DATA

Analyses of student data* are presented in this Chapter. The evaluation team assessed the career-related skills objective by examining course grades in subjects supported by teacher-trainers. They evaluated the attendance objective by comparing attendance during the 1984-85 school year with baseline attendance data from the previous spring. Finally, a sample of Pre-Vocational Rating Scales were examined and a profile of student characteristics constructed to determine program success in assessing vocational attitudes and behavior.

COURSE-SUPPORT COMPONENT

The course-support program objective stated that eighty percent of the students enrolled in this component would pass the course in which they received support. The percentage of students passing as a function of type of course (vocational, non-vocational) for both the fall and spring terms is presented in Table 2. As indicated in this table, the evaluation objective was achieved: ninety-one percent of the students enrolled in either vocational or non-vocational supported classes attained a passing

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* Data were available for 243 students enrolled in the program during the fall term and for 216 enrolled during the spring term. Data for the remaining students were missing for a variety of reasons. One major source of confusion about the number of students served related to the delay (of approximately one and one-half years) between the time students left private institutions and the time their names appear on the state roster. This delay as well as inaccuracies in state records, resulted in the inclusion of names of students who never registered and the absence of names of students who left state-supported programs and were legitimately eligible for funding. Additionally, some students eligible for the program were either graduated or discharged. For all these reasons, data for some students were missing and could not be included in the analyses.

Table 2

Percentage of Students Passing Supported Course

Terms	TYPE OF COURSE		Total
	Vocational	Non-Vocational	
Fall, 1984 N=157	91%	91%	91%
Spring, 1985 N=164	93	86	90

- At least ninety percent of the students participating in the course-support component attained passing grades in their supported course during both the fall, 1984 and spring, 1985 terms.

grade in that course during the fall, 1984 term. During spring, 1985, ninety-three percent of the students enrolled in vocational, and eighty-six percent of those enrolled in non-vocational classes attained passing grades in their supported courses.

ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT COMPONENT

The attendance objective stated that students would demonstate a significant improvement in attendance between the spring, 1984 term and the 1984-85 school year. Thirty-five of the 73 students reported to be in the attendance component of the program had complete attendance information for both the spring, 1984 term and the full 1984-85 school year.

Students attendance fluctuated around 40 percent during the spring, 1984 term (40.6 percent) and during the 1984-85 school year (39.7 percent). A t-test for correlated data indicated no significant difference in attendance ($t = 0.21$, $df = 1$) during this time period. These findings do not show that participation in the attendance improvement component of the program had a positive effect on student attendance.

PRE-VOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

Behavoral rating scales were completed for all students who participated in the course-support component of the program. The rating scales were examined to determine the scale's utility in assessing vocational attitudes and behaviors. Teachers rated students on scales ranging from one to five (one signifying never and five signifying always) on several characteristics including attendance, punctuality, grooming and dress, ability to follow directions, cooperativeness with peers and appropriateness of social

skills for each student. The findings indicate that students in the course-support component almost always attended school ($\bar{X}$ = 4.1) on a regular basis and in a punctual fashion ($\bar{X}$ = 3.9). These students were described as well-groomed and appropriately dressed ($\bar{X}$ = 4.3). They were usually able to understand and fulfill task requirements ($\bar{X}$ = 3.8) and follow health, safety and other procedures ($\bar{X}$ = 4.0). They almost always worked well and socialized with other students, ($\bar{X}$ = 3.8) were pleasant, outgoing, friendly ($\bar{X}$ = 3.8), and cooperative with teachers and other authority figures ($\bar{X}$ = 3.9).

These findings indicate that the behavior rating scale can be used as an assessment tool in determining student characteristics concerning vocational attitudes and behaviors, and identifying areas requiring teacher intervention. The scale also provides a description of the average course-support student as responsible, cooperative and eager to work and learn.

STAFF PERCEPTIONS

Eighteen staff members including the six teacher-trainers and a sample of special education assistant principals and supported teachers were questioned about program strengths and weaknesses. All those interviewed agreed that the individualized supportive attention students received from teacher-trainers provided students with a sense of belonging and acceptance which was particularly beneficial during their period of transition into new schools. They also believed program activities improved vocational awareness and instilled in students the value of education in facilitating career preparation. Staff considered specific employment opportunities as the primary motivation for students to participate in program activities.

Assistant principals also commented on teacher-trainers' assistance in identifying and distributing career-vocational materials, developing career-vocational curriculum and providing services which benefit special education students outside the P.L. 89-313 program.

Notification of students' eligibility was considered a major obstacle to program functioning. As mentioned previously, eligible students appear on state printouts one and one-half year after they leave their prior educational setting. These lists often include students who never show up at city schools and do not include other participating students eligible for program services. Obtaining student records from private schools is another problem with those of many students never located. Teacher-trainers also stressed that the city did not have enough career-vocational program options or employment opportunities to satisfy the needs of all students. They also noted that their time was not used effectively because students were spread out over so many schools throughout the city. Teacher-trainers believed that they could provide more continuity of services by visiting schools more often and for longer periods of time. Everyone interviewed stated that the outreach for L.T.A. students should be handled directly by attendance staff and the time of P.L. 89-313 teacher-trainer staff would be better spent on services for those students already attending.

SUMMARY

The Career Preparation Program was successful in achieving some, but not all, of its stated objectives. Analyses indicated that program efforts improved the career-related knowledge and skills, and provided

assessments of vocational attitudes and behaviors of students who participated in the career-related support component of the program. However, program efforts to improve attendance of students with excessive absences and truancy were not successful. Staff were generally positive about the program although they believed that notification of student eligibility and the amount of time spent trying to retrieve L.T.A.s were major obstacles to the success of the program.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Career Preparation Program successfully met two out of its three objectives. Career-related knowledge and skills improved and teacher assessment of vocational attitudes and behavior was completed. However, the attendance objective was not met. The needs of students with severe attendance problems seem to be beyond the scope of services the program was able to provide.

The quality of services provided by teacher-trainers was generally good. However, as would be expected, those teachers with more experience were better able to meet student and staff needs. The primary strengths of the present program lie in the expertise of trainers and their career-related knowledge and supportive approach. The individual attention teacher-trainers give to students in tailoring programs or employment opportunities to their specific interests and the sense of value students derive from their one to one relationships with the teacher-trainer were also considered important program strengths. The primary weaknesses of the program concern the identification of eligible students and the insufficient number and variety of vocational programs and employment opportunities within the program and perhaps within the city itself.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following specific recommendations are made:

- Procedures for determining student eligibility should be modified. The State should be appraised of the need to decrease the time between the date students leave state-supported institutions and the time notification of eligibility is sent to the program office, and to improve the accuracy of information on eligible students.
- More accurate record-keeping procedures should be developed to facilitate the comprehensive assessment of program success.

- The State should be appraised of the need to develop a better system for the timely transmission of records of P.L. 89-313 students to provide teacher trainers with student records in a more timely fashion.

- The program focus on improving attendance of L.T.A.s should be reconsidered. If teacher-trainers limited their involvement with L.T.A.s to providing referrals to existing attendance services, they would be able to focus more on participating students.

- High School Division staff should identify and further develop additional vocational-training referral sources to accomodate the large number of participating students and their diverse needs and interests.

- A more accessible means of career and vocational assessment is needed to provide this service to a greater number of students.

- High School Division staff should develop additional employment opportunities, to provide a greater number of participating students with work experience.

- Because of the wide scattering of the P.L. 89-313 population, effort should be made to organize the scheduling of visits to decrease travel time and thus maximize teacher-trainer time for work with students and staff.